



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Leslie, Esther (2019) This other atmosphere: against human resources, Emoji, and devices. *Journal of Visual Culture* 18 (1), pp. 3-29. ISSN 1470-4129.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/26531/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

## This Other Atmosphere: Against Human Resources, Emoji, and Devices\*

Esther Leslie

### Keywords

Emotional labour, labour power, smile detection, atmosphere, caring, analytics

### Abstract

Frequently humans are invited to engage with modern visual forms: emoji, emoticons, pictograms. Some of these forms are finding their ways into the workplace, understood as augmentations to workplace atmospheres. What has been called the ‘quantified workplace’ requires its workers to log their rates of stress, wellbeing, their subjective sense of productivity on scale of 1-5 or by emoji, in a context in which HR professionals develop a vocabulary of Workforce Analytics, People Analytics, Human Capital Analytics or Talent Analytics, and all this in the context of managing the work environment or its atmosphere. Atmosphere is mood, a composite of emotions. Emotions are a part of a human package characterised as ‘the quantified self’, a self intertwined with - subject to but also compliant with - tracking and archiving. The logical step for managing atmospheres is to track emotions at a granular and largescale level. Through the concept of the digital crowd, rated and self-rating, as well as emotion tracking strategies, the human resource (as worker and consumer) engages in a new politics of the crowd, organised around what political philosopher Jodi Dean calls, affirmatively, ‘secondary visibility’, high circulation communication fusing together speech, writing and image as a new form. This is the visibility of communicative, or social media, capitalism. But to the extent that it is captured by HR, is it an exposure less to crowdsourced democracy, and more a stage in turning the employee into an on-the-shelf item in a digital economy warehouse, assessed by Likert scales? While HR works on new atmospheres of work, what other atmospheres pervade the context of labour, and can these be deployed in the generation of other types of affect, ones that work towards the free association of labour and life?

### On HR

‘Managers set the tone and pace for your organization. Why not empower them to create a motivational, engaging, productive, continuously improving work environment in which

people will thrive' (Heathfield, 2018). These are the opening lines of an online careers advice article about the functions and importance of Human Resources. Human Resources, as a workplace department, manages the processes of deploying human beings and their capacities in work situations, including hiring and firing them, administering and training them. HR considers issues related to their daily management, their performance and payment. Human Resources refers both to the department that oversees and manages employees and to the objects of HR's engagement, the employees, who are the resource of an organization or workplace. HR is subject – a department that acts, and object, a resource acted upon. To make it clear, those who act upon Human Resources might be called HR people. 'HR people should create an atmosphere that appreciates individuals and supports businesses' (Cornerstone, n.d.) states Cornerstone OnDemand Inc, a cloud-based learning and talent management solutions company in California. These HR people are responsible for producing an atmosphere in which HR as workers exist. An article explaining the importance of HR departments, hosted on a website titled TalentCulture, observes 'A company's profile is mainly judged by the policies and the working atmosphere of the company. The main job for any human resource team is to make sure that their company has a health [sic] and a welcoming working atmosphere' (Mukerjee, 2015). What HR as a department does, above all, according to these puffs, is to produce an environment, an atmosphere in which work can occur as productively, smoothly, efficiently as possible. HR manages the atmosphere, producing mood and ambiance, as much as it oversees the resources deployed in that atmosphere and which are co-constitutive of it. Atmospheres and environments, understood in the metaphorical, rather than physical, sense (Henckmann 2007: 48), can be interpreted as spaces in which mood operates, in which emotions are at play. Such atmosphere or environment HR hopes to shape or stage. HR manages atmospheres and moods in order to colour the subjective experiences of workers in the workplace. Atmospheres are environments that enter the self, adjusting moods. If atmospheres confound - or rub out - the boundaries between humans and things (Anderson 2009: 80; Heibach 2012; Rauh, 2012), might their manipulation be the very best tool in HR's kit, as it deploys its Human Resources - in terms of workers - as things that succumb to the pressure of environments, adjust themselves in response to them? In order to manipulate an atmosphere, it may be necessary to measure it, just as gases in the Earth's atmosphere are measured. The work of HR turns to the measurement of atmosphere, the calibration of environments, the assessment of moods in and around its human resources.

Humans have been resources for ever. Humans have provided resources, most notably the capacity to labour and to care. Some might call this capacity, which develops through history, the very definition of human resourcefulness. Over time, technologies and techniques are annexed to these capacities. As capacities, these resources that are intrinsic to humans are nowadays caught up in a professionalised notion of ‘Human Resources’, which relates to recruitment, management and professional development practices in workplaces.<sup>1</sup> The term Human Resources, in the narrow departmental sense, describes a quasi-science of personnel management that begins to establish itself as professional practice in the 1920s. It developed, a recognizably modern, if fledgling, form, in the first two years of the twentieth century, for example, at the National Cash Register Co, in the USA, where a human resources department was instituted for purposes of dealing with grievances, after a number of strikes and lockouts (Niles, 2013: 6). In the contemporary period, HR justifies itself not simply as a system for managing day-to-day affairs in a company, but rather as that which will give a company a competitive edge. HR promises to deploy its resources to beat the rivals, even if everyone in the sector is, by and large, using the same systems and management innovations. Over the decades HR has developed a raft of terminology and management techniques, such as ‘strategic workforce planning’, ‘Resource Capacity Planning’ and ‘talent management’, newly coined concepts for today’s constantly changing work environments, in which it is necessary to ‘pipeline internal and external talent’. As Sue Brooks, chief innovation officer at global RPO and talent management firm Cielo, puts it:

It’s important to point out that strategic workforce planning lays the groundwork for organisations to really maximise the ROI (return on investment) of people, while also creating a flexible talent plan that enables them to respond swiftly to the changing economy (Brooks, 2015).

This citation illustrates, with its coinage of ROI, the sense in which, in the past decades, under the impetus of Chicago School economic theory, the worker has come to be understood as being or possessing ‘human capital’. ‘Human capital’, a rather elastic term, might mean the workforce regarded as a physical means of production, a cluster of humans with skills and abilities that suit each one of them to one role or another. But, in addition, human capital might be understood as something that can be cultivated or grown, or in which one can invest and thereby expect some sort of return.

Investment in human capital might take the form of education, training, medical treatment, cosmetic surgery, all sorts of investments of money, time and further resources, on which it is hoped a return of profit will be received over time, through efficiencies or productivity gains. HR appropriates for itself an interest in questions of workplace performance, which are now understood in relation to notions such as engagement and motivation that involve an emotional aspect. Part of this human as capital resource includes, alongside the right skills and looks, states of emotional well-being, their management or refinement, the encouragement of certain personality types, commitment or loyalty to employers and the emotional capacity to perform proficiently, or more proficiently, more resourcefully, and with an appropriate demeanour. Only in particular atmospheres might specific emotions appropriate for work flourish. Mood is one of the assets that HR should be able to access and augment, if possible, through the cultivation of atmospheres, in order to perform its role in managing, to the most profitable and mutually beneficial ends, its human resources.

#### Labour power as resource

Recognising the human as a labouring resource in a specific way, that is to say, in historical terms, was the work of Karl Marx. He considered how the capacity of humans to labour, to care, to cultivate, to compute, to lift, to break, to oversee, and to do all this in relation to something else, something made or experienced for the self or another, is differently caught up, deployed, recompensed or rewarded in varying social contexts. Marx gave human resourcefulness the name 'labour power'. Labour power is not the same as work undertaken. However complex its interpretations (Thomas, 2010: 47-54), labour power describes, in short, a conceptualisation of work as a capacity, which is then sold or freely given, depending on the means of production, the available technologies, or the social framework within which labour occurs. As Marx puts it:

We mean by labour power, or labour-capacity, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form (*Leiblichkeit*), the living personality, of a human being, capabilities which he sets in motion whenever he produces a use-value of any kind (Marx, 1976[1867]: 270).

Labour power is an aptitude of the living human being, a productive energy that characterises humans, even if it finds differing specific forms in different social circumstances. Extracted

human resources, taken or sold, or rather resources that have the ability to be commodified or given away, are described by Marx as physical and mental, and they include the power to twist or shift or craft, as well as the capacity for thought and emotions. Labour power may indicate the capacity for manual dexterity or the capability of imagining or conceptualizing a series of operations. Mental capacities might include emotional states, questions of mood or personality. To think and to emote are dimensions that employment may draw on, or, alternatively, require to be simulated or dissimulated. These capacities are deployed in the production of use-values, that is in production of any thing or any service. Such acts of production are what constitutes labour and - within the capitalist mode of production, which is the one that Marx dissects - is paid for as such. In being deployed, to make use values, labour power is a commodity. This commodity that is labour power is a peculiar and rare one. It uses up the body and brain as a kind of fuel, and, after depleting, it is restorable.

Labour-power, however, becomes a reality only by its exercise; it sets itself in action only by working. But thereby a definite quantity of human muscle, nerve, brain, &c., is wasted, and these require to be restored (Marx, 1976: 272).

In this time, during which labour power is deployed, human elements are used up, and the amount of their consumption is a 'definite quantity'. It is as if the self has been mined and the results burnt up. But there is always more to access. Labour power is a quantity that depletes and needs restoration. Brain power is exhausted. Nerves are grated. Muscle is overstretched. It is necessary to restore, to refill these resources within the human that have been consumed in working. Affected by work are parts of the body and the mind, thought, the emotions alike. Each worker is left to find its own modes of restoration, so that the capacities can be topped up again, in order to be sold again. The giving of a wage and the restriction of working hours allows for the purchase and enjoyment of further resources necessary for their reproduction, or the fulfilment of needs and desires: food, entertainment, sleep in a bed – such that what has been used up might be restored. And if one cannot be restored, if there is fatal exhaustion, this abstract quantity called labour power can be bought from elsewhere, from another producer of labour power.

The measure of this labour power may be time – how much time has the employer bought during which this labour power will be exerted? What quantum of energy does this time of exertion represent? Unlike other commodities, 'the determination of the value of labour-

power contains a historical and moral element' (Marx, 1976[1867]: 275), for its value is determined collectively and is dependent on the demands and struggles of those who supply it, which involve matters of confidence, the mood that might make a group of workers feel combative, moved to strike or make demands on employers, or that which might make them regard each other as competitors, rivals who should be outdone on price. Labour power is sold, but the thinking, moving worker is never severed from it and might dispute the terms of its sale. However, everything that results from the exertion of labour power in the form of acts of labour belongs to the capitalist. Labour power has been bought and consumed, in order to bring about something else, a third term, a result that is bought along with the labour power that brought it into being – that is, whatever use value, as product or service, comes into being.

For Marx, labour power, an energy producing a capacity for work, relates not just to physical capacities but also mental, thinking capacities and emotional ones, such as morale or temperament. In *Capital*, Marx refers extensively and ironically, to the 'Philosopher of the Factory', Dr. Andrew Ure, who, in his 1835 work, *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Or, An Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain*, is shown to plead for the factory as an improving place, not least through its generation of an atmosphere that was a welcome contrast to that of the sordid city:

Dr. Andrew Ure showed, that if children and young persons under 18 years of age, instead of being kept the full 12 hours in the warm and pure moral atmosphere of the factory, are turned out an hour sooner into the heartless and frivolous outer world, they will be deprived, by idleness and vice, of all hope of salvation for their souls (Marx, 1976[1867]: 337).

Marx reacts to sentiments such as this line: 'Animated with a moral population, our factories will flourish in expanding fruitfulness' (Ure 1835: 428). According to Marx, in his dissection of the thinking of the theorists of factory capitalism, the factory is conceived of as a controlled atmosphere, or an atmosphere of control, in which souls can be bettered through a hinging of the worker and increasingly self-acting machinery. Exposed to the discipline of labour, predicated on the rigid functioning of the machine and the moral guidance of the overseer, the worker improves in self-discipline and morale. Ure insisted on capitalist manufacture's interconnection of three organic systems: 'the mechanical, the moral and the commercial, which may not unaptly be compared to the muscular, the nervous, and the sanguiferous systems of an animal' (Ure, 1835: 55). All facets must be deployed correctly within the work

environment by a manager of what might come to be called Human Resources – the mechanical subordinate to the moral constitution and both cooperating with commercial efficiency (Ure, 1835: 55).

It may be a significant coincidence that as Marx worked on *Capital*, in 1862, Duchenne du Boulogne produced a text book - *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression* - on the muscular basis of emotional states – at least the impression of such – with photographs and discussion of the use of electrical currents directed at certain muscles of the face – muscles of joy, muscles of sadness, of surprise and fright (Guillaume Benjamin Duchenne du Boulogne, [1862]2006). Body and emotions are hinged, naturally, and also as a capacity that can be forced to produce. The machine's attention exacts specific emotions, by activating muscles that contort the face. These generated emotional states are likely not felt or experienced internally. The frame in which they are induced – electrical shocks, cold metal spikes and so – would likely induce other emotional reactions. The text book is an early example of how it is possible - certainly in the age of the photograph or machinic stare - to make a database of emotions that will lend itself to becoming operative (Beloff, 2018: 18). Emotional life can be produced and reproduced as image. Charles Darwin used some of the images in his 1872 volume *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. The shock-inducing apparatus had been erased in the reproductions for print. These muscular contractions become evidence of felt states. Art plays nowadays with this physico-mental capacity to emote, referencing not the discipline of labour but rather the fickleness of consumer attention: For example, the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern staged 'Forced Empathy' by Tania Bruguera in 2018/19, its low frequency sounds and irritating particles stimulating tears generate a physical and figurative atmosphere, as a commentary on emotional connections to refugees.

Marx wrote of labour power long ago. Is the labour power of today's human resources ever more heavily invested in questions of morale? Are the capacities to labour of contemporary workers more aligned to emotion, mood management and affect? Language has shifted from the nineteenth-century focus on moral constitution to that of morale, emotion, and attitude. Certainly a focus of HR in general now is less on musculature, even if the muscles still need to do work, if only to make a smile or a grimace? The resource that is the human is often now employed as a generator of emotion, atmosphere, comfort or intimidation. Human resources are an indefinite quantity of muscle, brain, nerves in movement, which may be the movement of stretching out a smile, a nod of affirmation, a shop worker's polite phrases, a bouncer's tough

demeanour outside the nightclub. All these muscular movements may be monitored reactions, required to prove their effectiveness, and as such employed in the realm of what has been termed emotional labour power (Brook, 2009: 24). There are arguments as to whether emotion-based labour is inherently alienating, whether emotional dissonance inevitably results, or whether it is possible to inhabit emotional states ironically, or, indeed, if it is possible to gain satisfaction from deploying acted and felt emotions in the workplace. Emotional labour covers a variety of activities, for the presence of emotion in the workplace is various. There is the work of holding in emotion, managing it such that what appears is appropriate for the work context. In the earliest extended definition of emotional labour, by Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983: 7), indicating ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’, performance of emotion in the workplace was presented as decidedly alienating. Emotional attitude, the effort of keeping up a smile, in the face of angry customers or ungrateful clients, the energy needed to display positive emotion and to repress negative aspects, is an energy mustered by the worker, but it belongs to the managers who have purchased that emotional labour power. This emotional control or management is organized so as not to jeopardize the product, the service, the labour outputs that have been bought by the employer or consumer, part of which includes an emotional performance or demeanour. Along with any claim to outputs, the emotions produced or repressed are alienated, such that they come ‘more to belong to the organization and less to the self’ (Hochschild, 1983: 198). Some critics have asked, in response, what is the authentic self that is being lost here – not least because a private self with emotions proper to it is only invented in accordance with an individualistic system of Possessive Individualism that accompanies the emergence and formation of Capitalism. The misgivings of authentically felt emotions does not, though, necessarily negate the suspicion that, at the same time, ‘our emotions are detached from us and constructed as interchangeable and measurable things that can be exchanged on the market or as skills that add to our labor power’ (Arruzza, 2014).

Alongside emotional labour, there is the coinage ‘affective labour’, defined as indicating ‘forms of labour that produce and circulate states of being, feelings of well-being, desire, ease and passion’ (Read, 2003: 128). In the case of affective labour, it is not a matter of managing an emotional life in the context of work, so much as actively providing emotions as part of the work output. Labour power is invested in producing emotions. The emotions themselves become the outputs as commodities. Such affective labour often relies on the inhabitation,

whether forced or not, of certain emotional states, in order to transmit them, or to produce corresponding feelings in a kind of contagion of emotion.

There have been perceived physical and mental costs to the requirements of some emotion-based labour. Psychologist Makoto Natsume observed the presence of depression, and RSI type muscles aches and headaches, amongst female service industry workers, some of who where his students, who were no longer aware that they were continually smiling, and not just, as required, when at work. These workers even smiled unknowingly when relating negative and distressing experiences. Natsume labelled it 'smile mask syndrome' (Belkin, 2008). In contemporary workplaces, workers might be trained in appropriate facial expressions on meeting the public, and admonished if the required state of smiliness is not achieved. Reports 10 years ago detailed how the 500 employees of the Keihin Electric Express Railway Company were required each morning to smile into a camera that fed to a computer system devised by Omron (Downie, 2009). In such systems, facial features, such as lip curvature and wrinkles, are analysed and a rating given for the individual's smile quality, from 0 to 100, with personalised feedback, such as 'lift up your mouth corners'. Workers also receive a print out of an ideal smile to refer to throughout the day. The machine schools the emotions, or better, calls them into being, as performance.

The labour power of smiling has its costs, multiple ones. Emotion is a resource, an energy, a labour power that is directed towards production. Emotion is also a product, the output, a part of the saleable thing or experience. Emotion is a capacity that is deployed in order to produce something – an atmosphere, a mood, an experience or service, or perhaps a thing, such as when a product is apparently 'crafted with love' or 'made with care'. Such emotional labour power - the capacity to emote, believably enough at least - is what makes the prospect of AI replacement of workers complicated. At the same time, this capacity, this labour power and this labour of emotions find another outlet as output, in as much as emotions are, increasingly, rendered as data, which is then to be further used and exchanged. Emotions become a kind of raw material, something to be mined. This endless resource of emotions has been made excavatable and capturable by contemporary technologies, which make it possible for emotions to be donated without respite. The work of psychologist Paul Eckman has been central to these developments. From the 1960s, Eckman has collated non-verbal behaviours and 'microexpressions', establishing a Facial Action Coding System (FACS), results of which are passed on to companies, governments, spiritual leaders and law enforcement

agencies. The rationale for much of the work is the visual detection of lies, by the camera, which itself is said to never lie (Eckman, 2018). It finds a recent use in the iBorderCtrl robots to be test-deployed on the borders of Latvia, Greece and Hungary. The project sets itself in the context of growth in movement across borders and the 'increased threat of illegal immigration', exerting pressure on border guards.

iBorderCtrl provides a unified solution with the aim to speed up the border crossing at the EU external borders and at the same time enhance the security and confidence regarding border control checks by bringing together many state of the art technologies (hardware and software) ranging from biometric verification, automated deception detection, document authentication and risk assessment.

The robot border guard decides whose face fits and who is telling lies to gain access to the EU. An avatar poses questions, as it evokes software for face matches and processes fingerprints and palm vein technologies, while also analysing non-verbal microexpressions: 'iBorderCtrl deploys well established as well as novel technologies together to collect data that will move beyond biometrics and onto biomarkers of deceit' (iBorderCtrl, 2018).

In the digital age, the practice of HR has been reinvigorated by the prospects of mining data sources relating to its human subjects, workers or potential workers. This granular analysis becomes a science of atmosphere, of corporate mood, of office ambience. Digital systems facilitate the accessing of data about the managed human resources in a number of ways. Workers are tracked and analysed using digital applications known as 'Software as a Service' designed for 'human capital management'. The digital programmes and procedures go by various names, such as Workforce Analytics, Human Capital Analytics or Talent Analytics. Those selling the packages and the ideology of talent analytics and other vogue phrases claim to be leveraging data to create predictive analytics models for 'human capital'. That is to say, they promise to divine the future. Analytics tell employers, for example, who is likely to leave the organisation or who is working more productively, allowing strategies to be put in place to make efforts to hold onto those who are more 'talented' and let go of those who are not. Analytics are a product of now available massive pools of data, which can be evaluated at various scales and granularities. 'Quantified workplaces' (Enthoven, 2013) collect data concerning employee performance, productivity, number of keystrokes, turnover rates, employee retention, employee engagement and overall job satisfaction, and more which is

monitored and analysed automatically, while workers are requested to log their rates of stress, wellbeing, subjective sense of productivity, sometimes on a Likert scale of 1-5, conveyed through little pictograms of button faces which range from large smile to a downturned mouth. A scale of 1 to 5: there may only be room, at least in the administered world, for five emotions. Each bit of data is a clue to future moves on the part of the floating ‘specks of human capital’ (Brown, 2011: 127). Such analytics might be able to track a general shift in morale or mood as it sweeps across a company. That emotions and mood are key indicators is evident in the rise of another digital analytics field, which is Emotion Analytics, or Sentiment Analysis. New techniques of emotion tracking through computers have been directed at workers - as well as consumers - in various ways. Beyond endless online surveys monitoring emotional states, microphones collect data on language and tones of voice in the workplace. Audio mining techniques and a correlation engine ascribe the labels of human emotions to those monitored words and tones. There is also the mobilisation of video cameras to capture facial expressions and modes of attention. These migrate from the workplace to zones of leisure to the shopping centre to the school or other institutions. In June 2018, reports circulated of a ‘smart classroom behaviour management system’, used in a school in Hangzhou in China to assess degrees of attention and mind wandering during classes through computerised facial analysis (Houser, 2018). The company Amazon is a leader in deploying these measures of emotional and affective response in the workplace and in the arena of consumption. In September 2018, there were reports that Amazon had applied for a patent for self-opening smart parcels that can video the recipient’s “excitement” as they open the package’ (Blunden, 2018).

Emotions in the digital age are tracked, monitored, packaged, analysed, and sometimes sold off elsewhere as data. Emotions are a part of a human package including what has come to be called ‘the quantified self’, a self intertwined with – subject to but also compliant with – tracking and archiving. This quantified self is a natural inhabitant of the ‘Quantified Workplace’ and was first engendered in relation to medical and fitness technologies, such as Fitbit devices or other fitness trackers. It was propelled into wider visibility through events in Silicon Valley, organised by Kevin Kelly of *Wired* and the journalist Gary Wolf, who were promoting what has now come to be a worldwide movement with digitally and physically organised groups who explore ‘self knowledge through numbers’ (Lupton, 2016; Moore, 2017). What begins as a curiosity about oneself in terms of fitness, well being, sleep quality, bodily capacities, becomes a gamified and ideologized quest for self-care, self-management

and self-optimisation, which is seen to make especial sense in a climate or atmosphere in which there exists competition for work and, once employed, the injunction to beat targets, while the wider world promises only exposure to eroded medical care, dismantled welfare states and the widespread nature of anxiety (WHO, 2016). Personal wellness is the responsibility of each and must be attended to through tracking and logging – well being is not to be conceived of as the result of structural deficiencies in the workplace or the social realm. Self-knowledge – in the face of the dysfunctional state and irresponsible workplace – exists alongside the simultaneous production of knowledge for others, in the form of big data, which our devices give up continually.

### Our own devices

A device is a gadget, a vaguely defined technical thing that does something, usually by mechanical or electrical power. Some devices are known as suspect, like the one designed to rip through the air and brick at the Grand Hotel in Brighton in 1984, which nearly killed Margaret Thatcher. A device is divisive, in etymological terms. The word comes from the late thirteenth-century Old French, derived from the Latin ‘divisus’, that which has been divided. When goods were being divided between people, a mark, known as a device, which took the form of an emblem, was put on each item to show whose was whose. A device is something that belongs to someone as an act of division. A device may also be literary, such as those devices a rhetorician or author might employ to gain best effect, or an advantage. Devices are things that separate, divide and mark out.

Devices now are presented as machineries of freedom. Every device sells a certain sort of freedom. Devices sell mobility – the ability to roam, but never be out of touch, the ability to draw stuff down from the cloud and out of the fogged network of Things and not be limited by physical location. The device offers the freedom to work where and when one wants. The device makes work always potentially accessible, in making the human resource always potentially accessible. The device figures at the heart of the HR concepts of ‘Enterprise Mobility’ and ‘BYOD’ (Bring Your Own Device), as presented, for example, by Citrix, a ‘mobile workspace’ company. Citrix promotes mobile computing:

Because in this new era, work is no longer a place – it’s something you do anywhere inspiration strikes (GALA, 2018).

The freedom of 'Bring Your Own Device' happily translates, the reader is told, into company advantage, because 'device flexibility is key to employee productivity' (Citrix, 2013). In addition, for the employer, we are told, the benefits, along with increased productivity, include cutting expenses, because fixed workplaces and infrastructure are unnecessary. The device has been described as a labour saving thing, but what seems to be clear in this epoch is that it is not labour power saving – on the contrary, through the device the whole labouring capacity of the worker is to be subsumed and made into resource, as illimitable labour power inside and outside of paid-for work situations. The device spills work everywhere. It is not the emotion alone that is a resource. The capacity to emote – to be an emotional human being - and to express that emotion is also one. This becomes a raw material for mining. This occurs through the donation of emotional states in the form of constant little updates on mood and sensibility on each device. Value is generated.

There is plenty of emotional work for us to do in the generation of data, in the making of human emotion into human resource. We give it up in vast quantities and at each moment. Our personal atmosphere is logged. The familiar faces invite us to press them after passing through security at an airport, in shopping malls or banks. The company Happy or Not, who manufactures this push button technology and the analytic software to process it, has the strapline 'Creating happiness in every business, worldwide'. It provides Smiley Face feedback technologies for employees too (Happy or Not: n.d.).

Ours are emoji times, the time of the emoticon, in which we are constantly required – or invited – to indicate our emotional state. We do this through the clicking of like buttons, or more likely a thumbs up sign, a heart, or a sad face. In 2016, Facebook rolled out a palette of 'Reactions' to click on in response to posts. Alongside 'Like' there were 'Love' 'Haha', 'Wow' 'Sad' and 'Angry'. These Reactions are quantified: '[...] posts will display the total Reaction count, and show the icons of the most popular Reactions' (Constine 2016). We are asked by social media – that is by those formats that have insinuated themselves into our waking lives at all points and are entwined with advertising – to reveal our emotions. We do this by pressing these icons of love, sadness and surprise in reaction to so many tiny events, all day, into the night. Through these our emotions take on a thing or image form. They become emblematic, like the original device, but not as a mark of a particular belonging, more a generic one. They adopt an alienated and standardised existence. There may be a bias

towards the positive, as in Facebook. If the posts are to be resources for advertisers, then they must maximise their circulation. Negative emotions, some argue, are less likely to be ‘shared’, and so all this positivity keeps the consumers online, on board and on message (Lee, 2014), while it feeds into the algorithmic organization of ‘stories’ and targeted advertising, and as our private inner feelings are broadcast publically and to entities way beyond our ken and for ends we can barely fathom. Perhaps there are historical shifts in this emotional landscape, though, as social media has threaded itself into every aspect of our lives and our lives have mutated correspondingly through that. Social media is the dominant channel of everyday life and everyday injustice. More recently it has been asserted that: ‘Negative emotions like outrage and contempt and anxiety tend to drive significantly more engagement than positive ones’ (O’Connell, 2018).

### Emoji code

Emoticons, a portmanteau word from ‘emotion’ and ‘icon’, render an emotional language through colons, brackets, commas, hyphens and other punctuation marks. In their familiar form they are younger than 40 years old, apparently first used – though not named – by Scott E. Fahlman, on 19 September 1982, when he typed together a colon, a dash and a bracket to make a smiley face on its side. This was to mark out a humorous remark on the bulletin board of his Computer Science university department (Fahlman, n.d.). Perhaps the smiley face was an after-image of that other smiley face, the big yellow round head with black dot eyes and upward curved bracket-style mouth, which appeared in 1963, courtesy of commercial artist Harvey Ball. Ball sold it cheaply to an insurance firm who desired a motivational symbol for a badge to be worn by employees (D’Ambrosio, 2011: 18-19). It was popular beyond all expectations and permeated the counter-culture of the 1960s, and returning in the 1980s and early 1990s rave culture.

The smiley emoticon spread too, as a technique of mood clarification, and it developed into a vocabulary of stacked and spliced keyboard characters, such as a wink ;), a grin :D, smugness :->, and tongue hanging out :P. Their vocabulary expanded further once computers were able to support the use of non-Western writing systems, such as katakana. The deployment of intricate combinations of ASCII characters set about indicating emotions, such as angry:

(>D<)° or furious: 🤪, actions such as head kick: 🦶, or ready for war (👊) or needing a hug (🤗).

Emoticons give way soon enough, though, to an ever expanding palette of pictograms to replace written text. Emoji, from the Japanese for ‘picture character’, were invented in 1999 by the pager company DoCoMo, for whom designer Shigetaka Kurita created a set of 176 twelve-pixel by twelve-pixel characters (Kurita, 2016). These were said to cover the ‘entire breadth of human emotion’ (Swan, 2017). The palette of emoji expanded, after being included in the UNICODE standard of 2010, which made it possible for emoji to feature in user interfaces of instant messaging software, smartphone apps, and social media websites. In 2015, Oxford Dictionaries named one especially popular one, showing a yellow face laughing so much tears gush from its eyes, its ‘Word of the Year, 2015’. They, like emoticons, have expanded into areas well beyond signifiers of emotions. How it is that a depiction of a hot dog slice is better than those letters h.o.t d.o.g., a cartoonic dog’s face preferable to the word dog, a picture of an eye, whether more realistically drawn or the popping cartoon eyes sufficient to signal something to do with looking, seeing, an open umbrella more legible than a report on the imminence of rain. Emoji increase their references and communicate to ever larger circles. Art reviews in newspapers and online in the UK may well these days be summarised by emoji. How is it that we so readily accepted that the complexity of emotions could be represented in tiny pixelated characters? Why do we participate in rendering our emotions into legibility – into this visual language – which has a counterpart in the visual language of the face that machines learn to read, to mine for data, to instrumentalize? For what reasons did we make our emotions into something outside of ourselves, a resource for others, not just friends, but those for whom we are the resource? And after emoji, a generalised visual language of emotion and reaction arrives – animated GIF libraries, image upload options integrated into text input boxes in comments and chat windows and stickers on platforms such as Snapchat or Snow, which add dog ears and noses or other augmentations to photographs. All communication on devices comes with supplements that work variously on mood, tone, emotional response and reaction or reactivity.

If emotions have been extracted in the workplace as a resource, they are also made part of the commodity culture in an explicit way. Lucrative entertainment has been made from the compulsion to externalise emotions, in films such as *Inside Out* – where the production studio

Pixar wanted a maximum of six emotions to be personified as characters. This was whittled down to five and so the film featured Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear, and Anger, a selection at least more expansive – and with more negativity – than Facebook’s palette. These emoji have their uses for commerce, speeding up transactions online, for emotional management, for seeking out vulnerabilities and targeting products or fixes at us. The Apple X phone has FACE ID technology, using it to unlock functions and annex the face to a payment system. Apple developed animoji – animated emoji, which are talking emoji based on the users’ own facial expressions:

The TrueDepth camera brings emoji to life in a fun new way with Animoji. Working with A11 Bionic, the TrueDepth camera captures and analyses over 50 different facial muscle movements, then animates those expressions in a dozen different Animoji, including a panda, unicorn and robot (Apple, 2017).

The 2018 software update of the phone, iOS 12, coinciding with the release of the iPhone XS and XR, introduced Memoji, customisable emoji made out of standard parts, with stock reactions for all situations, ‘brought to life’ by using the front facing camera as face tracker to capture mouth movements and facial expressions. This mimicked Snapchat’s Bitmoji app, the most downloaded app of 2017, and continuing with around 3 million downloads a month through 2018. Bitmoji generates a cute little animated customisable avatar, whose software demands full access to the smartphone, full access to all the users’ activities, which become for it a resource.

In June 2018, reports appeared on what was termed the ‘fastest growing business application in history’ (Bernazzani, 2016), Slack, or ‘Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge’ ([www.slack.com](http://www.slack.com)), self-described as ‘where work happens’. It is a workplace tool using instant messaging and gives users the capacity to add emoji buttons to messages, which other users can then click on to express reactions. The emoji and its channelling of emotions enter into the heart of the workplace. Or, as Slack’s own HelpCenter puts it: ‘Emoji are a spin on common emoticons that you can use to add some pizzazz to your Slack messages. 😊 Some critics rage against the ‘Diet-Coke-and-Mentos-like explosion of cat gifs, bot feeds, and emoji mashups you’ve brought into my life’ (Hulick, 2016). Life is, here, the workplace. Others ‘love’ it, and talk of addiction. Emotion in the workplace is a fraught business. Emoji in the workplace, HR departments hope, might, on the other hand, add to the

maximisation of human resources. To use emoji at work is to participate in an atmosphere in which work is amalgamated with entertainment. As a writer in Business Insider UK puts it: 'Unlike traditional email, where smiley and emoji use is generally verboten, Slack encourages a fun and light-hearted atmosphere' (Vega, 2017).

### Extracting emotions

Monitoring emotions is now usual HR practice. Team Mood is an application that follows groups of workers at 'team' level, requesting that they input their mood at regular intervals.

At the end of the day, team members tell if they have the feeling of having a good or a bad day. These analytics are a tool for the team for continuous improvement (Team Mood: <https://www.teammood.com/en/>).

There is nothing but continuous improvement. The mood of the team can be infinitely improved, always on the up. This is an example of the quasi-Japanese management philosophy of Kaizen, the incremental and collective pursuit of improvement in organisation, materials, and workflow, derived from the Toyota Production System to eliminate wastage, of matter, time, labour power (Ima, 1997). It is now extended into emotions.

The identification and logging of mood, or of attention, is a widespread capacity of machines, integrated, for example, into digital cameras with their 'smile detection', open eye recognition, and face detection technology, a routine element of the newer Perceptual User Interfaces. A smile is not hard to characterize and a machine can easily learn how to recognize it. In detecting smiles, the software looks for open eyes and an upward curved mouth, once it identifies a face or faces on the screen. Some cameras allow users to differentiate between small smiles and big grins, so that the camera knows exactly what to look out for achieved the desired shot. Of course, emotions have been created for machines before. The history of photography involves the structuring of faces so that the machines can read them. Duchenne's stimulation of muscles to produce certain faces is a grotesque version of the way in which the machine schools its subjects in facial presentation. The role of the photographic subjects is to produce out of themselves a controlled image, which they have been trained to regard as appropriate. The photographer elicits smiles, if not at the start, then in time, once the lenses improve, once the apparatus becomes more familiar. The apparatus,

or the photographer, requested at least the outward sign of a particular emotion, and often got it.

Humans exist in the digital epoch as a certain type of resource, a body and mind of data, providing endless information, within a circuit of interpretation in which the human resource is extracted and analysed by and between a digital image and a digital interpreter. In such circumstances, the donated aspect of emotional registration may be bypassed and the extraction occur automatically. There are reports that some China-based companies are using sensors in helmets and hats to scan workers' brainwaves and detect fatigue, stress and emotions such as anger or anxiety, though some have questioned the effectiveness of the technology (A Chen, 2018). According to a report in the *South China Morning Post*, in April 2018:

Hangzhou Zhongheng Electric is just one example of the large-scale application of brain surveillance devices to monitor people's emotions and other mental activities in the workplace, according to scientists and companies involved in the government-backed projects. Concealed in regular safety helmets or uniform hats, these lightweight, wireless sensors constantly monitor the wearer's brainwaves and stream the data to computers that use artificial intelligence algorithms to detect emotional spikes such as depression, anxiety or rage (S. Chen, 2018).

Brainwave scans are used to control the number and length of workers' breaks or to detect fatigue and attention loss. The emotions picked out in this report emphasize the negative ones, the ones that challenge productivity or might encourage worker revolts. Having located crisis points, the aching brain might be rested or retired from work. The personal mood of a single employee is monitored, as part of a calibration of mood across a whole work environment.

Such monitoring behaviours align with the widespread adoption of GPS and bio-tracking devices. The move here is from the realm of leisure into the workplace. In the USA, employees freely grasp to the integration of the device into the body or self making their data voluntarily available as involuntary capacity. At Three Square Market, a self-service vending machine manufacturer, voluntarily accepted RFID microchips into their bodies in 2017 (Metz, 2018). Its initial uses were for banal activities such as unlocking doors, logging in to

computers, using printers, and buying snacks, and storing photos, bitcoins, living wills and the like. The company is working on adding GPS functionality and the gaining of body data for medical and health purposes, data that might be of interest to HR as well as companies and governments and others. The chip's capacities will extend in the future. The workers become their own devices. They become devices of communicative capitalism. In November 2018, reports circulated in the UK press of the widening presence of microchips in workers and the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry voiced concerns about control and micromanagement (Rosvall, 2018).

### Crowd resources

In 2010, political philosopher Jodi Dean analysed emoji, the digital circulation of 'smiley-face and cranky-crab emoticons', as a deluge of moods, 'network generated moods', which in their flow generate enjoyment in amidst the injunction to participate in communicative capitalism (Dean, 2010: 23):

The loops and repetitions of the acephalous circuit of drive describe the movement of the networks of communicative capitalism, the ways its flows capture subjects, intensities, and aspirations. Accompanying each repetition, each loop or reversal, is a little nugget of enjoyment. We contribute to the networks, as creative producers and vulnerable consumers, because we enjoy it. In fact, the open architecture of the Internet enables and requires the capture of enjoyment insofar as it is premised on users' contributions, alterations, and engagement (37).

Emoji are emblems of this affective labour, miniscule badges of the ways in which we are asked to log our moods and, in so doing, produce the network itself, as well as other by-products. The generating of emotion, the manufacture of enjoyment, is a treat that keeps the network, and us, at work. The emotions formed are ours and not ours, just as the content produced is a product of enjoyment, sometimes, as well as alienated labour deployed for another. Hobbies, leisure activities, downtime, time for the self, all that is undertaken outside of the labour process of production, is conceived as another type of labour, or even more of the same labour, a labour of consumption, enjoyment, the cultivation and maintenance of status and networks.

In 2016, Dean returned to themes of digital capitalism, with a more hopeful demeanour, exploring, through the concept of ‘secondary visuality’, the ways in which emoji sidestep meaning and ‘keep up the communicative flow by preventing it from getting caught up, bogged down, or sidetracked into preoccupation with what it means’ (Dean, 2016: 3). Images flow quicker, more easily than words, or they mingle with text and speed up words’ circulation. All this circulation of fluid mashups amounts to an anti-individualised, collectivist self, who shares common feelings, commonplaces virally. Dean asserts a new politics of the crowd that can work its way out online. The crowd promises some sort of hope, a commons, an atmosphere of peers sharing and communicating in fresh and nimble ways.

The secondary visuality of communicative capitalism directs us to a visual milieu characterized by imitation, repetition and circulation. In this setting, the power of images comes from the crowd, the many who give them their force. Political tactics adequate to this setting will find ways to seize and deploy the common in the service of a divisive egalitarian politics. Instead of repeating the individualist worry over being just another face in the crowd, they will champion the face as a crowd, recognizing the increasing force of collectivity and the common and the necessity of seizing for the many what is claimed by the few (10).

Inevitably, of course contemporary capitalism has got behind this crowd. Human resources are certainly approached now widely on the level of the crowd. Crowd-sourced data comes to the fore in an epoch of technologically mediated ‘wisdom of crowds’ proposals, such as Yelp or Amazon reviews. In 2014, Wes Wu’s article, in *Workforce Solutions Review*, argued that crowdsourcing can form an important part of HR practice. Setting up a distinction between the slow time operating in a vendors’ call centre versus the quick time of an Amazon order, and a distinction between HR employees and non-HR employees, he argues:

Why can’t employees ask a question on a social corporate internet and allow HR and multiple other employees (crowds) to provide us with insights we want? (Wu, 2014: 25)

An example is given:

Imagine a simple health care provider inquiry that is commonly answered by HR call centers:  
Question: Can my domestic partner be covered under our health care benefits?

Answer 1: (Employee) Yes, that changed for us a few years ago. You should be good to go!

Answer 2: (HR) Yes, ACME Brands are fully supportive of any domestic partner arrangement. Here's a link to the policy...

Answer 3: (Employee) I asked this question last year. You can enroll your domestic partner as you would a spouse in the enrollment process.

Answer 4: (Employee) I'm not sure what the policy is, but there is an established group on social that might discuss some of these issues ([link here](#)) (25).

HR, notes Wu, would have to reserve the right to flag the best or inaccurate answers. Wu is confident that employees will self-censor inappropriate or unprofessional remarks, and, in addition, the crowd community will self-police. The crowd here is not a commons, but rather one modelled on the commercial crowd: the helpful consumer-friendly one who reviews goods and services. This crowd rates with stars, on Likert style scales, or by using emoji. The crowd circulates within the narrow range of internet-native vocabulary. This enters the workplace directly, as proposition.

The consuming public has gotten used to giving and receiving ratings, and that those systems are part of a larger ecosystem where the crowd will contribute to form an average opinion of any product. Consumer rating systems are so pervasive on mobile devices that it is difficult to find a place where ratings are lacking and consumers have become so accustomed to crowd-based review systems that they are frequently and completely dependent on them for the simple act of figuring out where to eat dinner or which widget to buy. They so firmly believe in the wisdom of the crowd because hundreds of people simply can't be wrong and the law of averages will ultimately play out. Crowd mentality using rating systems in the consumer domain is so strong that the next logical evolution is bringing this into the workplace and HR practices, as talent comes to expect a similar consumer-like experience at work (27).

The process, the author notes, could be adapted for performance review, allowing competence to be assessed by the crowd (of employees), perhaps using gamification strategies. The gig economy already runs on ratings. The human resource that is the worker becomes an on-the-shelf item in an Amazon warehouse.

Caring and not caring

The Internet, social media, modern modes of communication produce endlessly updating activity, like the turbulent activity of particles in a cloud – turbulence stems from the Latin ‘Turba’, crowd. This turbulence constitutes an atmosphere, one of feelings, opinions, reactions, status updates. But is this turbulence of emotional expression, this all-encompassing network of emotional exposure, not more like a cloud come down to earth, a generalised fog, such as is made technical in the fogging network of the Internet of Things. For humans, to be in a fog is to be confused, in confusion, unable to see ahead or behind, lost, bearings lost. A froth of images, a scum of social media inputs, a bubbling up of hate speech here, rumour there, all those who feel empowered to froth at the mouth and spew bile about the latest distraction, the last thing to effervesce and pop, giving way to the next, the next frothy distraction, the fad that floats into view in the frothiness of markets, which puff up on the bubbles of speculation, before bursting, leaving only a heap of plastic loom bands or glitter flakes or LCDs behind to meld fatally with the life of the seas.

Gabriel Tarde, the 19<sup>th</sup> century theorist of crowds, had an interest in the transmission of ideas and of people within social structures. Tarde’s *The Laws of Imitation* and *Psychologie Économique* discuss the ways in which concepts, ideas and emotions move through various communication infrastructures, such as railways, sea ports or telecommunications. In *Psychologie Économique*, in particular, Tarde emphasises the role the market economy plays in the spread of concepts, beliefs and desires (Tarde, 1902). He talks of contagion. Ideas and emotional states spread like diseases. They rush through crowds like viruses. Indeed these thoughts about the spreading of ideas and moods are connected to his thinking on crowds, which was distinguished from that of Gustave Le Bon, whose influential essay, ‘The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind’, was published in 1895 and established the scientific study of masses and crowds from a psychological perspective (Le Bon, 1896). Like many of his contemporaries, Le Bon focused on the latent criminal nature of crowds, a criminality that seemed to threaten liberal and individualistic notions of the individual within society. Tarde, in contrast, thought more about love in relation to crowds. In ‘The Opinion and the Crowd’, from 1902, he writes of ‘crowds of loving’ (Tarde, 1989) – whereby crowds are a form of perfect sociality in which imitation spreads without friction. Crowds are involved in some sort of imitation between parts, generating an atmosphere that is intangible but spreads, corporeally and mentally. The crowd is an energy. It has the capacity to transmit emotion. This transmission produces mood, the mood of crowds. In the crowd, imitative waves of

sentiment build up to become atmospheres. The crowd has emotion. It has sentiment. The crowd is a collective of affect, an atmosphere.

Marx turned to the concept of atmosphere in the natural sciences to provide a metaphor for the invisible but forceful orientation that class struggle exerts. His atmosphere is the physical one of gases that envelopes us. It offers a metaphor for the pressure exerted by revolutionary sentiment:

But, although the atmosphere in which we live weighs upon every one with a 20,000lb. force, do you feel it? No more than European society before 1848 felt the revolutionary atmosphere enveloping and pressing it from all sides (Marx: 368).

The force is not visible, not yet, and so is overlooked, or unseen, even though its pressure builds. Do you feel it? Is to feel an atmosphere a sign of solidarity, incorporated solidarity? Is it a sign of receptivity? How do you feel an atmosphere? Is this an atmosphere that differs from mood, from the digital interventions of HR as Team Mood with its staging, or manipulation, of environments, in order to maximise productivity, to glean from labour power the most that it might be made to discharge. This other atmosphere raises questions that concern the spreading of revolutionary ideas, or revolutionary feelings. Micah White, who was involved in Occupy in New York noted in 2015: ‘the next revolutionary movement will be a contagious mood that spreads throughout the world and the human community’ (White, n.d.). What does it mean to transmit a mood, an emotion – and how is this political? These emotions pass through quickly. Can these take us anyway towards understanding the mechanisms whereby not just revolutionary sentiment develop, but also the manufacturing of ‘a hostile environment’, in which, as if by a kind of osmosis, what was if not unthinkable then inexpressible becomes blatant. The UK Home Office hostile environment policy was devised under the Home Secretary, now Prime Minister Theresa May’s rule – it is a set of administrative and legislative measures designed to make staying in the United Kingdom as difficult as possible for people without leave to remain, in the hope that they may ‘voluntarily leave’. Concrete rules are established, such as asking university lecturers to act like border guards, but there is also a generation of an unwelcome atmosphere – that seeps – and arguably played its role in the hostilities and fears mobilised around Brexit. How do you make a hostile environment? How do you unmake it? How do you mobilise crowds for it?

How against it? How are people stimulated to care or not care? What of those who feel nothing?

The narrative of the film *Emoji* (2017) involves an emoji who lives inside a phone and whose mood fluctuates. He is unable to hold the still, unaffected face that he is required to portray, the ascribed 'meh' face. This emoji who does not function correctly, who does not show the appropriate mood symbol, must be deleted. Of course, the narrative of the film will find a way to redeem the emoji's fluctuating emotions and the message turns out to be that we may be accepted for who and what we are, even if that causes instability in the world. Instability can be productive. It can be a resource. The emoji whose mood is unsettled is something like a human, relates to human emotions, more precisely than the ones that express one emotion, one feeling – and yet the film cannot abandon them, will not delete them, because they are the avatars of the smartphone social media world we have made and they will find their uses, as does all data eventually, or potentially. The quest is to more accurately render all the possible gradations of emotion and to make each one usable for communicative capitalism.

One image relating to emotion that sluiced through social media channels was of Melania Trump, wearing a jacket from the high street fashion chain, Zara, in June 2018. It bore a message on its back, her parting shot after speaking about the plight of Mexican children on the border of the USA. It read 'I really don't care. Do U?' The U was done in that text-speak way, a signal of the sentiment's natural habitat in social media. What of the 'and U', the gauntlet laid down to others, asking them whether they wish to join this sentiment, to partake of this mood, which has been licensed by the very utterance. In this particular case there is much ambivalence about what she wanted not to care about – her husband's immigration policy, the public's opinion, the fake news agenda (as Trump insisted), anything else or nothing. Is this version of not caring the not caring of 'meh'? Or is it the not caring that is less ambivalent, more harsh, an active uncaring? Communicating such a sentiment that stretches from 'so what' to cold indifference makes it possible for others to join in on the spectrum, to catch the mood, as they did in a million tweets. This is performance that works on atmosphere, on the ways in which an atmosphere can shift, a mood changes, an environment becomes hostile to something. I don't, do you? I have made this statement of disaffection. You may make yours now – and you may join me, now I have licensed the thought. How do these things move, what law of imitation, what theory of the crowd is needed to track the dispersal of ideas as they spread, like fog, expand like a froth, float semi

solidly and stubbornly like a foam, a sticky foam, the sticky foam of a hostile environment. What crowds and what images of crowds and what theories of crowds will populate our lives and our dreams? How do we engineer our own crowds, change the defaults, the failings of those crowds and make crowds that care, or don't care differently? Or crowds that don't don't care?

The flurry of emotional expression that is represented by emoji, the constant barrage of likes and loves and signs of affect and revelations of mood, for sure, obscure the more subtle and complex states of being that exist – perhaps because those are not currently of use to marketers or manipulators, cannot be mined so efficiently, at least not yet, or cannot be always simply coshed by drugs that appear as a quick fix to emotional and mental distress or met with some other product that promises to wipe away trauma or enhance mood. This flood of emoji also leaves the smallest or no space for those whose emotional, or mental states, are regarded as so far outside the grid, so beyond the limits that all that can happen is that they get abandoned. What room for psychosis on the palette of emoji? What room for suicidal feelings? And if there were room, how might these be perceived in the bustle of updates, memes and one-liners? Of course suicide emoji exist – and maybe someone could communicate their intentions in this way and maybe it would be seen in the flood. Or maybe not. And maybe someone would respond, not just with a reaction emoji, but really responding. Or not. It would be wrong to dismiss the modes of communication of emotional states that humans – or tech companies – have invented, but they do draw attention to the current state of our emotional language. They make explicit that it lends itself to certain kinds of data capture and mining, and, in the process, the complex actuality of emotional states and the extremities of emotions are subsumed and the simplified ones operationalised, not least for work, or, as a labour power, that gives constantly, with all moods made productive for something? Our devices are complicit in this circulation of explicit but circumscribed emotions, which are, as labour has been before it, subjected to parcelling up, the division of labour, a strict division, all the better to calibrate all that labour power, that capacity to think and feel and to respond to and produce a mood, and, in an operation of what has been termed a 'psychopolitics' (Han, 2017), all the better, through the devices' devious divisions, to direct those capacities where they are most profitable.

\*An earlier version of this article was delivered at ‘Human Resources: Whither the Human?’, a conference on the human as a quantitative-qualitative resource, organised at UCL by Marquard Smith, 20 April 2018.

## References

- Anderson B (2009) ‘Affective atmospheres’. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2): 77-81.
- Apple (2017) press release, 12 September 2017, ‘The future is here: iPhone X’. Available at: [www.apple.com/uk/newsroom/2017/09/the-future-is-here-iphone-x/](http://www.apple.com/uk/newsroom/2017/09/the-future-is-here-iphone-x/)
- Arruzza C (2014) ‘The capitalism of affects’ *Public Seminar*, 25 August. Available at: <http://www.publicseminar.org/2014/08/thecapitalism-of-affects>
- Belkin L (2008) ‘Putting Some Fun Back Into 9 to 5’. Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2008/03/06/fashion/06WORK.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/06/fashion/06WORK.html)
- Beloff Z (2018) *Emotions Go To Work*. Colchester: Minor Compositions
- Bernazzani S (2016) ‘How Slack Became The Fastest Growing Business App of All Time’. Available at: [blog.hubspot.com/marketing/slack-fastest-growing-business-app](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/slack-fastest-growing-business-app)
- Blunden M (2018) ‘Smile for Amazon: your next parcel could film your reaction as you open the box’. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/tech/amazon-parcels-film-reaction-a3941036.html#comments>
- Le Bon G (1896) *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind*. New York: Macmillan & Co.
- Brook P (2009) ‘The Alienated Heart: Hochschild’s ‘emotional labour’ thesis and the anticapitalist politics of alienation’. *Capital and Class*, 98 (2): 7-31.
- Brooks S (2015) ‘Overcoming barriers to strategic workforce planning’. Available at: [www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/overcoming-barriers-to-strategic-workforce-planning](http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/overcoming-barriers-to-strategic-workforce-planning)
- Brown W (2011) ‘Neoliberalized Knowledge’, *History of the Present*, Vol. 1, No. 1 Summer 2011: 113-129.
- Chen A (2018), ‘Brain-scanning in Chinese factories probably doesn’t work - if it’s happening at all’, *The Verge*, 1 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2018/5/1/17306604/china-brain-surveillance-workers-hats-data-eeg-neuroscience>
- Chen S (2018) ‘Forget the Facebook leak’: China is mining data directly from workers’ brains on an industrial scale’, *South China Morning Post*, 29 April 2018. Available at: [www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2143899/forget-facebook-leak-china-mining-data-directly-workers-brains](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2143899/forget-facebook-leak-china-mining-data-directly-workers-brains)

- Citrix (2013) 'Bring your own device freedom', available at: [www.nascio.org/events/sponsors/vrc/Bring%20Your%20Own%20Device%20Freedom.pdf](http://www.nascio.org/events/sponsors/vrc/Bring%20Your%20Own%20Device%20Freedom.pdf)
- Constine J (2016) 'Facebook enhances everyone's Like with Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry Buttons'. <https://techcrunch.com/2016/02/24/facebook-reactions/>
- Cornerstone (n.d.) <https://www.cornerstoneondemand.com/ethical-guidelines-human-resources>
- D'Ambrosio B (2011) *From Football to Fig Newtons: 76 American Inventors and The Inventions You Know By Heart*. Morristown: Lulu.
- Dean J (2010) 'Affective Networks'. *MediaTropes eJournal*, Vol II, No 2: 19–44.
- Dean J (2016) 'Faces as Commons: The Secondary Visuality of Communicative Capitalism', 31 December 2016, Available at: <file:///C:/Downloads/Faces%20as%20Commons%20.pdf>
- Downie J (2009), 'Japanese railway company scanning employees' smiles'. Available at: [foreignpolicy.com/2009/07/07/japanese-railway-company-scanning-employees-smiles/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/07/07/japanese-railway-company-scanning-employees-smiles/)
- Duchenne du Boulogne G ([1862]2006) *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Ekman P, (2018) Paul Ekman Group. <https://www.paulekman.com/>
- Enthoven D (2013) 'Quantified Self? How About A Quantified Workplace?'. Available at: [www.wired.com/insights/2013/05/quantified-self-how-about-a-quantified-workplace/](http://www.wired.com/insights/2013/05/quantified-self-how-about-a-quantified-workplace/)
- Fahlman S (n.d.) 'Smiley Lore :-)'. Available at: [www.cs.cmu.edu/~sef/sefSmiley.htm](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~sef/sefSmiley.htm)
- GALA (2018) 'Company Directory'. Available at: [www.gala-global.org/company-directory/citrix-systems-inc](http://www.gala-global.org/company-directory/citrix-systems-inc)
- Han B (2017) *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. London: Verso.
- Happy or Not (n.d.), available at: <https://www.happy-or-not.com/en/>
- Heathfield S (2018) 'Role of Human Resources in the Workplace'. Available at: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/human-resources-4161680>
- Heibach C (2012) *Atmosphären: Dimensionen eines diffusen Phänomens* Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- Henckmann W 2007 'Atmosphäre, Stimmung, Gefühl'. In *Atmosphäre(n): Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an einen unscharfen Begriff*, edited by Rainer Goetz and Stefan Kraupner. Munich: Kopaed.
- Houser K (2018) 'Not Paying Attention in Class? China's "Smart Eye" Will Snitch on You'. *Future Society* 17 May 2018. Available at: [futurism.com/smart-eye-china-facial-recognition/](http://futurism.com/smart-eye-china-facial-recognition/)

Hochschild A R (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hulick S (2016) 'Slack, I'm Breaking Up with You', 29 Feb 2016. Available at: [ux.useronboard.com/slack-i-m-breaking-up-with-you-54600ace03ea](http://ux.useronboard.com/slack-i-m-breaking-up-with-you-54600ace03ea)

iBorderCtrl (2018) available at: <https://www.iborderctrl.eu/>

Ima M (1997) *Gemba Kaizen: A Commonsense, Low-Cost Approach to Management*. New York: Mcgraw Hill.

Kurita S (2016) *Inbox: The Original Emoji*. Moma online exhibition text. Available at: [www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3639](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3639)

Lee K (2014) 'Buffer Social Blog'. Available at: [blog.bufferapp.com/positivity-social-media](http://blog.bufferapp.com/positivity-social-media)

Lupton D (2016) *The Quantified Self: A Sociology of Self-tracking*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Marx K (1976) *Capital, vol 1*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Marx K (2000) 'Speech on the Anniversary of the People's Paper'. *Selected Writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Metz R (2018) 'MIT Technology Review'. [www.technologyreview.com/s/611884/this-company-embeds-microchips-in-its-employees-and-they-love-it/](http://www.technologyreview.com/s/611884/this-company-embeds-microchips-in-its-employees-and-they-love-it/)

Moore, P (2017) *The Quantified Self in Precarity? Work, Technology and What Counts*. London: Routledge.

Mukerjee T (2015) 'Reasons A Human Resource Department Is Necessary'. Available at: <http://talentculture.com/reasons-a-human-resource-department-is-necessary/>

Niles N (2013) *Basic Concepts of Health Care Human Resource Management*. Burlington, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning.

O'Connell M (2018) 'The Deliberate Awfulness of Social Media'. *The New Yorker*, 19 September 2018. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/the-deliberate-awfulness-of-social-media>

Rauh A (2012) *Die besondere Atmosphäre: Ästhetische Feldforschungen*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Read J (2003) *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Rosvall B (2018) 'Microchip implants are threatening workers' rights'. *The Conversation*, 22 November 2018. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/microchip-implants-are-threatening-workers-rights-107221>

Swan M (2017) 'Emoji: The World's First Global Language', *Medium*, Jul 17, 2017.

Available at: [medium.com/s/story/meaning-without-words-an-emoji-revolution-aadb4bc0266c](https://medium.com/s/story/meaning-without-words-an-emoji-revolution-aadb4bc0266c)

Tarde G (1902) *Psychologie Économique*. Paris: F. Alcan.

Tarde G (1903) *The Laws of Imitation*. Paris: H. Holt.

Tarde G (1989) *L'opinion et la foule*. Available at: [livre-rose.hyper-media.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/tarde\\_opinion\\_et\\_la\\_foule.pdf](http://livre-rose.hyper-media.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/tarde_opinion_et_la_foule.pdf)

Thomas P (2000) 'Labour Power (Arbeitskraft)'. *Krisis: Journal for contemporary philosophy* no. 2. NL: Stichting Krisis.

Ure A (1835) *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Or, An Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain*. London: Charles Knight.

Vega N (2017) '14 tips and tricks to master Slack, one of the most popular work apps in the world'. Available at: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/slack-tips-tricks-features-advice-2017-6/#change-the-way-your-slack-window-looks-1>

Virno P (2001) 'General Intellect'. Available at: [www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm](http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm).

White M (N.D.) 'Activism in Crisis'. Available at: [www.micahmwhite.com/activism-in-crisis-protest-is-broken/](http://www.micahmwhite.com/activism-in-crisis-protest-is-broken/)

WHO (World Health Organization) (2016) 'Investing in treatment for depression and anxiety leads to fourfold return', New Release, 20 April 2016. Available at: [www.who.int/en/news-room/detail/13-04-2016-investing-in-treatment-for-depression-and-anxiety-leads-to-fourfold-return](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/detail/13-04-2016-investing-in-treatment-for-depression-and-anxiety-leads-to-fourfold-return)

Wu W (2014) 'Human Resources and the Wisdom of the Crowd'. *Workforce Solutions Review* Available at: [www.ihrimpublications.com/WSR\\_Online\\_Archives/Wes\\_Wu-WSR\\_Sept14.pdf](http://www.ihrimpublications.com/WSR_Online_Archives/Wes_Wu-WSR_Sept14.pdf)

Esther Leslie is Professor of Political Aesthetics at Birkbeck, University of London. Her books include various studies and translations of Walter Benjamin, as well as *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant Garde* (Verso, 2002); *Synthetic Worlds: Nature, Art and the Chemical Industry* (Reaktion, 2005); *Derelicts: Thought Worms from the Wreckage* (Unkant, 2014), *Liquid Crystals: The Science and Art of a Fluid Form* (Reaktion, 2016) and *Deeper in the Pyramid* (with Melanie Jackson: Banner Repeater, 2018)

**Address: Department of English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London, 43-46  
Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD, [e.leslie@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:e.leslie@bbk.ac.uk)**

---

<sup>i</sup> Countless web commentaries rebuke HR departments for undermining something seen as a good, 'human resourcefulness'. Eg: <http://www.cobizmag.com/Business-Insights/Are-you-a-resourceful-human-or-a-human-resource/>;  
<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/resourceful-humans>;  
<https://www.hrbuilders.eu/en/blog/hrbuilders-connect-with-content-from-human-resources-to-resourceful-humans>